What is the Museum Alliance?
Last Updated 1/23/07

1. What is the Museum Alliance?
The alliance began as a partnership [the Mars Museum Visualization Alliance, or Mars Viz] between NASA's robotic Mars Exploration Program and museums, science centers, and planetaria across the country to bring the adventure of exploring Mars to students, educators, and the public. It is intended to bring real-time data and Current Science and Technology to museum visitors through visualizations and professional development of the museums' staff. Due to the success of Mars Viz, the model is being expanded to include other NASA content areas including other solar system objects, our Universe, and Earth itself.

2. How will people be able to share the adventures of space exploration?
Through NASA TV, the internet, and you. Our job is to deliver NASA content to you quickly: the data, access to people, and stuff. Each of you then uses that info to do what your own organization does best. For example, many museum educators are using the images and video in their daily live programming and classes. Planetarium directors and others realize they are learning geology through a real case study rather than linearly through a geology course. Alliance partners network with each other and share products and tools that they develop.

3. How does this all work?
The Museum Alliance is a community. Partners communicate regularly through a listserve and regular telecons. The telecons allow you to ask questions directly about NASA processes, mission events, etc. When there is breaking news, we try to set up "breaking news" telecons to allow you to interview mission personnel directly. The listserve and the telecons allow Alliance partners to network with each other and share information. The telecons are recorded; transcriptions are mailed via the listserve and posted on the private website. Sometimes they are made available for replay for several days; for example, the discussion of Opportunity's findings about water on the martian surface in the past. We're also experimenting with .mp3 files.

If you have questions we can't answer, we'll try to find someone who can. If you want to borrow, build or buy a spacecraft model, we can give you helpful information. If you have special requests for speakers for live presentations, etc., we will try to accommodate you. The Museum Alliance is meant to be the front-door to NASA that museums and planetariums have long asked for.

4. What will be on NASA TV and what will be on the internet?
NASA TV will remain the primary best source for event commentary, interviews, videos, and press conferences, especially at the time of major mission events, for example.

The internet is a cheap, efficient path to deliver images and information to classrooms, auditoriums, or kiosks. The images will be made freely available via NASA TV and over the Internet. You also may elect to register to have images from the Mars rovers and Cassini delivered to you over the internet on a free subscription basis.

Certain information may be available only on the password-protected private website for use by the Museum Alliance partners and not the general public.

5.   Why must Alliance Partners register?
When Mars Pathfinder and the Sojourner Rover landed on Mars in 1997, the internet traffic was the largest for any single event up to that time. We expected the internet traffic for the landings and operation of the twin Mars Exploration Rovers to be much larger than that—and it has been. A primary goal of the Museum Alliance is to be sure that museums, science centers, and planetaria have unimpeded access to the images from the spacecraft, so that they may share them with their audiences. To this end, we set up dedicated servers that only registered users may access, to keep the traffic on these servers manageable. Registered users have access to technical support, e-mail notifications of upcoming mission and press events, DVDs, professional development opportunities, and the opportunity to advertise their organization's NASA-related events on public NASA websites.

6.   How do we register?
Fill out the signup form at http://informal.jpl.nasa.gov/museum/alliance/. You will need to select a Login Name and Password, as well as a Challenge Question and Answer. We will also register the IP address of your computer, to allow access to certain parts of the Museum Alliance website that are behind firewalls.

7.   Why do you need my static IP address?
For security reasons, to assure access to certain data and to assure the Museum Alliance site is accessible only to the Museum Alliance partners (not the general public). Static IP addresses are a more secure method than passwords.

8.   What is my IP address?
An IP address is an identifier for a computer on a network using the internet. The application form automatically reads and inserts your IP [internet protocol] address. If this is not the computer you will generally be accessing the site from, enter the IP address of the computer you will generally be using. An easy way to determine your IP address (if you don't know how to find it on your own computer) is go to the computer you will be using to access the Museum Alliance website and point your browser to http://whatismyip.com. If you do not register an IP address with us, you will not have access to certain areas of the website. You may register more than one computer (i.e., office and home) by sending an e-mail to Anita.M.Sohus@jpl.nasa.gov.

9. **Why doesn't my IP address work when I try to access the Museum Alliance site?**
If your IP address falls within any of the three ranges below, please talk to your network administrator to obtain your "real" IP address as these ranges are normally used for local networks only.
    10.0.0.0 - 10.255.255.255
    172.16.0.0 - 172.31.255.255
    192.168.0.0 - 192.168.255.255

10. **What if I don't have a static IP address?**
Supply one IP address and send an e-mail to Anita.M.Sohus@jpl.nasa.gov stating that your organization uses rotating IP addresses; our technical folks will work with you on this.

11. **Why are there "basic" and "expanded" options for participation?**
We know that the resources of museums, science centers, and planetariums run the gamut from high to very low. Our hope is that even if you all you have is a telephone and a computer, you will benefit from the Museum Alliance team's efforts to help you take your audiences along on our explorations.

12. **What is the difference between the Basic and Expanded options?**
The "basic" option assures you access to the dedicated website, e-mail notifications of schedules and news, use of the listserve, professional development opportunities (mostly via regular telecons), DVDs, and the opportunity to advertise your organization's mission-related events on NASA's public web pages. The requirements for the "basic" option are to:

- Comply with NASA/JPL processes on release of news and images.
- Report audience numbers and demographics.

The "expanded" option assures you all of the above, plus: automatic internet delivery of images throughout some missions. The requirements for the "expanded" option are to:

- Supply IP address of machine that will be used to access the dedicated website and receive the internet deliveries of images.
- Sign and return a License Agreement for use of free JPL-proprietary software, FEI Client (File Exchange Interface).
- Install FEI Client on machine at your organization (works on Linux, PC, and Mac operating systems). (Due to the volume of data expected, you may want to dedicate a machine for this purpose, or save things off your hard disk regularly.)
- Comply with NASA/JPL processes on release of news and images.
- Report audience numbers demographics.

13. **What happens after I submit the application form?**

You will not get an immediate reply when you hit "submit" but you will hear from us within a day or two. Your application will be scanned to be sure your organization fits the customer profile (i.e., museum, science center, planetarium). A member of our tech support staff will register your IP address and send you confirmation and the URL of the private website. You will also be added to the Museum Alliance listserves that you selected (currently Solar System Exploration and Earth-Sun). To be removed from a listserve, e.g., you are a network manager who doesn't need the information on a regular basis, e-mail Anita.M.Sohus@jpl.nasa.gov

14. How do I get the FEI Client software?
When you sign up for "expanded service," you will be sent a license agreement for JPL's proprietary File Exchange Interface (FEI) Client software. When you return the signed license agreement to us, you will be contacted by one of our technical staff with instructions on where to download the software, and how to install it.

15. What platforms does FEI Client support?
FEI Client supports Unix, PC, and Mac OS X.

16. What other technical requirements are there?
If you subscribe to receive the near-real-time images, you will probably want to dedicate a computer to this effort, as the data volume could be as high as 100 GB. Another way to handle the data volume is to regularly save the images off of your hard disk.

If you do NOT subscribe to receive the near-real-time images, there are no special computer requirements.

17. What file format will the images be in?
The images will be delivered as JPEG, TIFF, and SVG files.

18. How will we be able to display these images?
Anyway that works for you. We have modified a piece of slide-show shareware called "SVG Viewer," (Scaleable Vector Graphics), which is available for download from the Museum Alliance website. The images will display well on screens ranging from a laptop to plasma screens to theatre screens up to 20' (although 12' is probably the best). The graphics and text will remain crisp.

19. Are there any restrictions on how we can use the images?
No. You may show them to audiences, put them on websites, or print them. Each will include a credit line, which we ask that you retain. If you wish to make a commercial product using an image from a JPL-managed mission, please refer to JPL's image use policy at http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/images/policy/ and be aware that you may need to sign a license agreement with Caltech. If you wish to make a commercial product using other NASA products, contact Debbie Rivera at NASA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

20. Will other non-image data be released through this process?
Other data, such as spectra, will most likely be made public through press releases.

21. Will the near-real-time images be full color?
No. The near-real-time images will be raw images, that is, unprocessed, so they will be in black and white. Processed images, including color and stereo, will be made available either through the press releases or through the Museum Alliance and mission websites.

22. How do we get color images?
As color images, mosaics, panoramas, anaglyphs, or animations are created, they will be made available through the Museum Alliance or mission websites.   Some may be labeled as "embargoed" images.

23. Are there any restrictions on using images labeled as "embargoed"?
Yes. You may not use the images or information for public distribution until the date and time indicated on the Museum Alliance website. You may ready them for use, however, as long as you do not display them before NASA releases them.

24. Is there any penalty for ignoring the embargo?
Yes. Your institution will lose access to the Museum Alliance privileges, and such privileges for all other institutions may be jeopardized by the actions of a few. We appreciate your diligence on this issue and your help in building trust in our partnership.

25. Will we get full-dome images?
Depending on time and resources, it is possible that some full-dome image products will be produced. We would very much like to provide these, so we will keep this on our radar screen.

26. Will we get video?
The Mars Exploration Rover missions have been able to supply animations and visualizations on DVDs, including HD MPEG2 files on DVDs to those who can use them. Other missions may do so depending on their budgets.

27. Are there any other requirements for membership in the Museum Alliance?
We request that you report to us how you use the images and other information. The simple on-line report form ("Report Events") on the Museum Alliance website requests basic information about your events, including audience demographics.

28. Is there any penalty if we don't report?
Your organization may not be considered for other opportunities. The reason that we need this data is so that in providing the infrastructure and data, we can report to NASA Headquarters the effective use of funds for the public. Without your help in this reporting, our partnership will not be able to show the benefits. The reporting process begins at http://informal.jpl.nasa.gov/museum/Advertise/ .

29. Will other NASA missions use this process to distribute images?
Each mission has its own data structure and processes. We hope that other missions will take advantage of what we've learned in this alliance in order to make their images available in near-real-time also. Your feedback will be very helpful in this area. The Mars Program will continue to use and improve this for future Mars missions (which launch every two years). The Cassini/Huygens and Deep Impact missions use this process.

30. What happens to the Mars Museum Visualization Alliance when the Mars Exploration Rover missions end?

We plan on continuing and improving the Alliance, and expanding it to other NASA missions. We value you as a community of informal science educators who are dedicated to bringing current science and technology to museum audiences. We look forward to continued feedback from members on focus areas that interest you most, and will seek to expand in those areas.

The advantage of the Mars Exploration Program is that missions launch every 26 months. The next mission is the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, to be launched in 2005. It will be able to take images of Mars from orbit that show features as small as beach balls. In essence, through its cameras and other instruments, this orbiter will make many "virtual landings" to sites of scientific interest that may be potential landing sites for future landers and rovers. This mission will also have strong education programs that enable the public and students to suggest where they would like images to be taken.

In addition to the provision of visual materials, we also plan on continuing professional development opportunities for museum staff through regular interactions with NASA scientists and engineers. We would like to continue to advertise your NASA-related events and exhibits on our site so that people in your home areas have quick and easy access to event information.

We're always interested in hearing your ideas too.